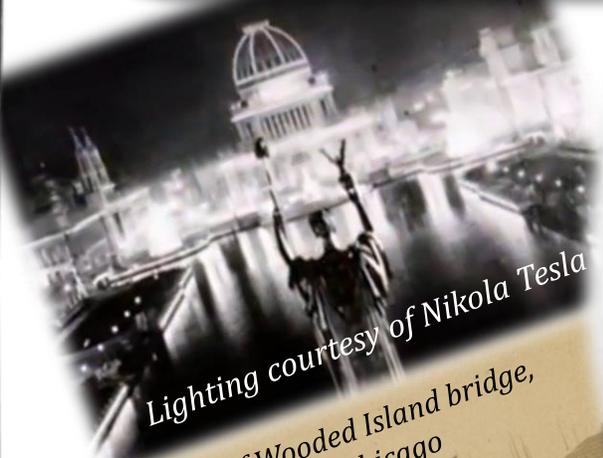
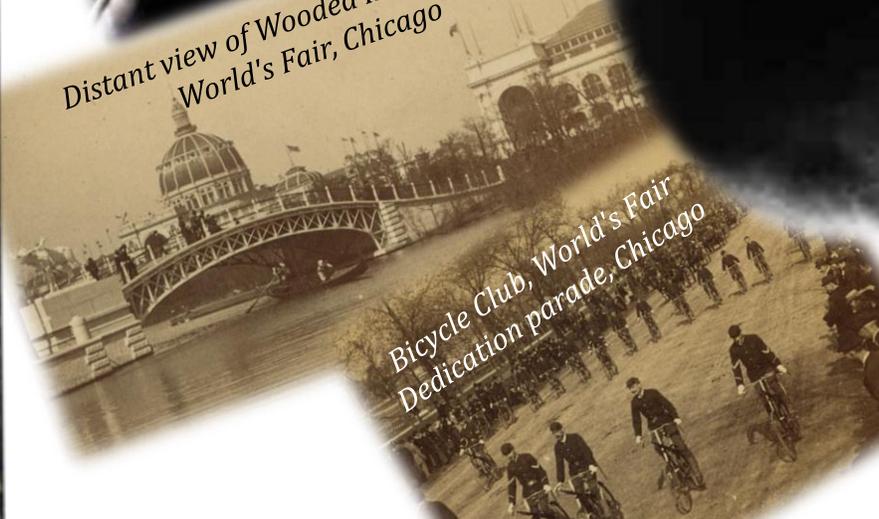


1893 World Fair hosted in Jackson Park, Chicago



Lighting courtesy of Nikola Tesla

Distant view of Wooded Island bridge, World's Fair, Chicago



Bicycle Club, World's Fair Dedication parade, Chicago



1893

Mani Prakash

A Spiritual & Cultural Quarterly eZine of Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago No. 11, 2016

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EDITORIAL

Among 1.26 Billion Indians, almost all know the name of one city in America—Chicago.

Every child in India knows that a Sanyasi (monk), Swami Vivekananda, addressed the audience at the first World's Parliament of Religions held in 1893 as 'Sisters & Brothers of America', and from that moment the rejuvenation of India began.

The majority of Indians cherish a desire to visit the place where 'Swamiji' (Indians love to call their beloved Swami Vivekananda 'Swamiji') gave his historic talk—after which Chicago became synonymous with Swami Vivekananda.

Though the very first World's Parliament of Religions was only one among a total of twenty congresses held in connection with the grand Columbian Exposition, it was the most popular. In the language of Revered John Henry Barrows, one of the famous and influential Organizers of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, "No one gathering, ever assembled, was awaited with such universal interest." (World's Parliament of Religions, 1893, P.59). The historical evidence shows that the interest of the people was mainly for one orator—Swami Vivekananda.

Many are not aware that, inspired by the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, a second World's Parliament of Religions was convened in Chicago in 1993. It lasted for 8 days, from Aug 28th through Sept 4th, and 125 religious groups addressed the audience. The original 1893 World's Parliament of Religions was held for 17 days, from Sept 11th through Sept 27th, and only 16 religious groups participated.

During the 1893 Parliament, Swami Vivekananda gave about 12 extempore lectures, read out a paper on Hinduism, and chaired the evening session of the 3rd day.

Swami Vivekananda, with his charismatic personality, delivered soul-stirring messages of peace & progress and became, in the language of Merwin-Marie Snell, Chairman of the Scientific Session of the 1893 Parliament, ".....beyond question the most popular and influential man in the Parliament."

Swami Vivekananda's speeches and oratory

attracted thousands & thousands of people, and the first World's Parliament became very popular because of him.

The New York Herald stated in an 1893 issue – "He (Swami Vivekananda) is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions." Interestingly, the same paper, after 100 years, in its August 29, 1993 issue mentioned, "(Swami Vivekananda) the star of the 1893 parliament."

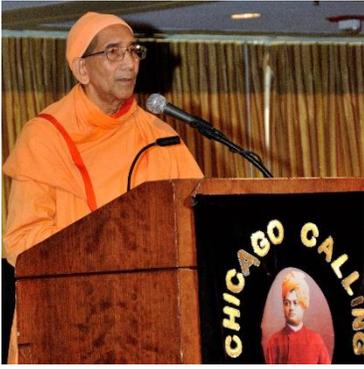
Before the gathering of more than 6000 people, who crowded into the assembly hall of the Permanent Memorial Art Palace, now known as Art Institute of Chicago, Swami Vivekananda passionately and eloquently called for the end of religious bigotry and intolerance.

Swami Vivekananda's ideas influenced the thinking of the various religious groups. On January 9, 1894 the 'Republic' published on its front page, "A religious wave now sweeping over New York & Brooklyn." "Swamiji has lit the fire of Spirituality in innumerable hearts", wrote Marie Louise Burke, the famous researcher on Vivekananda. According to Mr. A.L. Basham, the well-known indologist, Swamiji was the first Indian religious teacher to make an impression outside of India in the last one thousand years.

"I am the one man," wrote Swami Vivekananda to Alasinga Perumal, "who dared to defend his country, and I have given them what they never expected from a Hindu...." Of all the services that Swamiji has rendered in his life, the greatest is his service to Hinduism. "When he (Swamiji) began to speak", wrote Miss Margaret Noble (Nivedita)," it was the religious ideas of the Hindu; but when he ended, Hinduism had been created." Those who want to be true Hindus must read Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda urged religious leaders to help human beings to live like humans—"each must accept and assimilate the spirit of the others while preserving his individuality and grow accordingly to his own law of growth."

The present day world badly needs to revisit the first World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 and remember that great lover of humanity, Swami Vivekananda.



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S CONCEPT OF A PERFECT MAN

SWAMI MEDHASANANDA

Minister, Vedanta Society of Japan

This lecture was delivered on Nov. 9th, 2013 at "Chicago Calling".

Namaskar! Konnichiwa (Japanese)!

Most Respected Swami Suhitanandaji, respected and dear brother monks and sister nuns and devotees, our sincere thanks to dear Ishatmanandaji and his colleagues for organizing this great event in the name of Swami Vivekananda and inviting us to attend it. As you know Swamiji came to the U.S. in 1893 from India via Japan, so myself and six more devotees they are all there came all the way from the land of the rising sun not just the land of tsunami as you perceive to respond to Chicago calling to carry all the best wishes of our Japanese devotees and to be with you in celebrating this great event of Swamiji's birth anniversary in Chicago. My topic is "The concept of a Perfect Man according to Swami Vivekananda".

Once Swami Vivekananda had remarked his brother disciples "first you understand me then you will understand Sri Ramakrishna." Swami Turiyananda; himself a realized soul as well brother monk of Swamiji was asked what these remark implied? Turiyanandaji answered that "Since Swamiji was a perfect man his brother monks should first understand him before trying to understand Sri Ramakrishna was the embodiment of divinity. Now what is this concept of a perfect man of whom according to Turiyanandaji Swamiji was himself a role model. In one sense a perfect man is a myth especially as long as one considers oneself a body mind complex and governed by the three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas.

These gunas are made of matter and matter has its limitations, perfection can be attained by transcending these gunas and realizing the spirit which is pure conscious free from all imperfections and all blemishes.; thus realized souls who transcended these gunas are equated with perfect souls. Interestingly, those great souls who realized truth follow mostly a single path of devotion, or knowledge or meditation. When these souls start teaching they give emphasis only on the path that they themselves have trodden, thus Swamiji observed there are many teachers in this world but you find that most of them are one sided they are highlighting only devotion or only knowledge or only meditation. Then Swamiji put forward his suggestion in the form of a question "Why not have the giant who is equally active, equally knowing and equally being is it impossible? Swamiji said "certainly not! This is the man of the future of whom there are only a few at present" and we can surmise Swamiji and all his brother disciples were among them. One who wants to become perfect, a perfect man should integrate his personality at the levels of body, mind and speech; Man mukh ek Kara (Bengali)" and develop himself physically, mentally, morally, intellectually and above all spiritually. Nevertheless, such spirituality should not be one sided but combine different streams of spirituality otherwise it cannot fully manifest the potentiality of perfection which he has within. When I travel here and there seeing my saffron robe some asks thinking me that I belong to Iskcon they ask "Are you Hare Krishna?" I said, "No, I am Ramakrishna."

They didn't understand the difference between Hare Krishna and Ramakrishna and they asked, "What's the difference between Hare Krishna and Ramakrishna?" I said, "there is only one difference; the difference between "only" and "also", the difference between "Inclusiveness" and "exclusiveness." They believe in only Krishna but we believe in Ramakrishna we believe in Jesus we believe in Christ and we also believe in Krishna.

So friends we should be all Inclusive. So a perfect man should be holistic and pluralistic and all Inclusive. Sri Ramakrishna trained Swamiji and his other brother disciples made them perfect and entrusted in them specially Swamiji a mission to make a new type of man cast in his own mould that's why Swamiji proclaimed "man-making is my mission" and he spent his life in fulfilling this mission of his Guru. Thank you very much.

Swamiji not only conceptualized the perfect man he symbolized this concept in originating and embalming and actualized it by introducing method within the monastery he found it. The emblem of the Ramakrishna order as you know consists of the Sun symbolizing Jnana Yoga, the lotus for Bhakti Yoga, the wavy water for Karma Yoga, the serpent for Raja Yoga, the swan symbolizing Paramatman; the supreme reality which will be realized by the combined practices of all the four yoga's. The practice of all four of these yoga's harmoniously is made possible by following a practical method of daily routine. At the monastery if you observe our ashrams daily routine you will find that the monastic's practice raja yoga during meditation, bhakti yoga when they go to the temple and pay their respects to Sri Ramakrishna attend evening vesper services and sing devotional songs, they practice karma yoga when they perform various types of selfless services and they practice Jnana yoga when they study scriptures, practices discrimination and focus on the supreme reality that's Brahman. If you really believe that Swamiji is the prophet of this age we should also believe that the emblem he

designed for the Ramakrishna order as its ideal and the method of practicing all the four yoga's in everyday life he had introduced in the Ramakrishna order monasteries was not only meant for the monks and devotees of that order but also for all the aspirants of the world who can emulate them to make themselves perfect. While preaching the gospel of man making, Swamiji mainly emphasized Ashtanga Marga; Eightfold paths or ideas. First and foremost of these ideas is the de-hypnotization of the soul. Once when Swamiji was giving talks on Atman in the U.S.A., someone from the audience put charge up saying "Swami, are you not trying to hypnotize us by convincing us to believe that we are the Atman?" Swamiji assured that "no madam, you are already hypnotized I am trying to de-hypnotize you." Swamiji would often stress upon one's thinking that he is not the body, not mind, not ego but that he is Atman. He would say that the greatest superstition that we have and that we should get rid of is that I am body or sometimes he would say our mind is Maya from which we should become free. The root cause of all our sufferings of all our fears and our selfishness is our mistaken understanding that you are body that you are mind when you are actually Atman and this is the state of hypnotism, the greatest obstacle to our becoming perfect.

There are seven more important ideas reiterated by Swamiji which help us to become perfect we need not elucidate each as they are self-explanatory and include.

First: cultivate Shraddha, that is faith in God and faith in yourself and believe that all power is within you manifest that power. Second: be kind, benevolent and serve others by seeing God in them. Third: be pure and practice self-abnegation which is center of morality. Fourth: hold fast your faith but respect other's faith also. Fifth: combine intense activity with eternal calmness. Sixth: practice both attachment and detachment. Seventh: cultivate learning.

In Swami Vivekananda's concept of a perfect man such a person will not only harbor lofty thoughts and ideas but must assert the power to transfer them into actions. This is not possible unless he has a strong body and will power. So Swamiji often re-iterate "make your nerves strong what we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel." There is neither any long jump nor high jump in journey to perfection so Swamiji charting the path of perfection advised aspirants to transform themselves gradually but not hastily and abruptly. In transforming aspirants thus he uses the concept of triguna, unique to Indian philosophy and advised that depending upon one's state one should transform oneself from a tamasic state to a rajasic state and then from the rajasic state to sattvic and finally transcending the sattvic as well. Thus while in the west he advocated to mostly rajasic people that they should transform themselves into sattvic state and in India where people are steeped in tamas in the name of sattva at that time Swamiji advised transformation to rajasic and then on to sattvic but in both cases the goal was to transcend all this gunas and become free and perfect. It is not that only Swamiji discussed the theme of perfection which also forms part of different scriptures and thoughts of religious teachers and philosophers of the world but what sets Swamiji's concept of a perfect man apart is that it is well defined, holistic, universal, practicable and also best suited in the present age. Moreover his presentation of such concepts is so forceful so penetrating that even though they come to us now in black and white they pierce into our heart, give us a shock therapy and induce us to become different. Thus even after 150 years of Swamiji's birth many people who have a natural above idealism resort to Vivekananda and accept him as their friend, philosopher and guide; this is especially true about the Indian youth. The journey to perfection often compared to working on a razor's edge is not an easy or comfortable journey.

So Swamiji would say that "Never mind failures, they are quite natural, they are the beauty of life, this failures. Never mind struggles, the mistakes; hold on to the ideal a thousand times and if you fail a thousand times make that attempt once more." Now does this concept of a perfect man and its actualization have a social dimension, yes it has. The greatest breath the highest catholicity the utmost integrity the intellect of Sankara and heart of Buddha can be combined in a perfect man. Swamiji believed that a perfect society can be constituted by these perfect men since society is nothing but an aggregate of individuals. But to establish such an ideal society every individual must try to change himself to become ideal. Here in lies the real problem; like the popular adages of Murphy's Law there are four laws concerning change in society. These are, first law; everyone wants to change the society and make it perfect. Second law; no one wants to change himself. Third law; everyone want others to change. Fourth law; finally no one changes and society remains the same. So without expecting others to change or trying to change others let each of us start the process by trying to change ourselves first. Let me close by recounting a story, a story of Mullah Nasruddin; the legendary Sufi wise man. Once Nasruddin was found sitting near the plaza in a pensive mood, people being curious asked him "Mullah Saab; salaam alaikum! Share with us what you are pondering. Nasruddin replied "I want to change this damn society, so I am thinking how to achieve it. That's great! Quipped the folk and left him. One year later Nasruddin was found in the same spot in the same mood and the people asked him "Mullah Saab, last year you were pondering how to change society have you not found the solution?" Nasruddin answered "brethren I realized it's too difficult to change the society so now I am thinking how to change my family which too have so many of its own drawbacks. The people remarked "that's also very impressive"

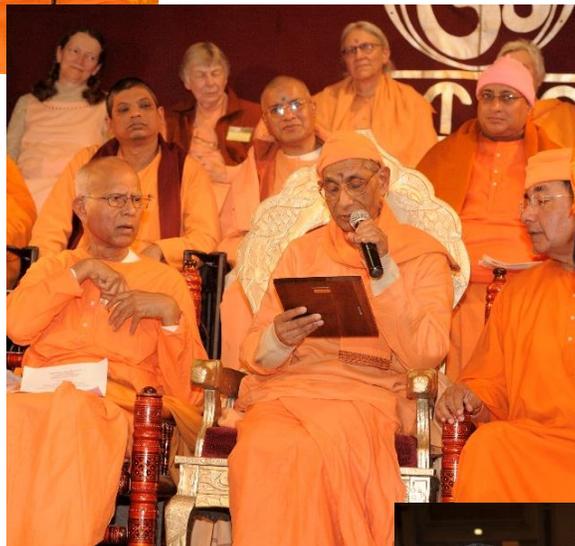
But after another year had passed Nasruddin was found back in the same place and the same thoughtful mood the people could not resist themselves and asked loud “Mullah Saab what makes you still so thoughtful”. Nasruddin confided “brother I have realized that it’s difficult not only to change society but to change my own family also so I am pondering how to change myself.” So friends let us all ponder like Nasruddin and also start acting to change ourselves so that we may become perfect as Swamiji wanted each of us to be so that consequently the society also becomes perfect.

Thank you!
Arigatou Gozaimashita! (Japanese)



All progress and power are already in every man; perfection is man's nature, only it is barred in and prevented from taking its proper course.

Swami Vivekananda
[CW 1: Raja-Yoga/Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms - Independence]



Infinite perfection is in every man, though unmanifested. Every man has in him the potentiality of attaining to perfect saintliness, Rishihood, or to the most exalted position of an Avatâra, or to the greatness of a hero in material discoveries. It is only a question of time and adequate well-guided investigation, etc., to have this perfection manifested.

Swami Vivekananda
[CW 4: Translation: Prose/Knowledge]

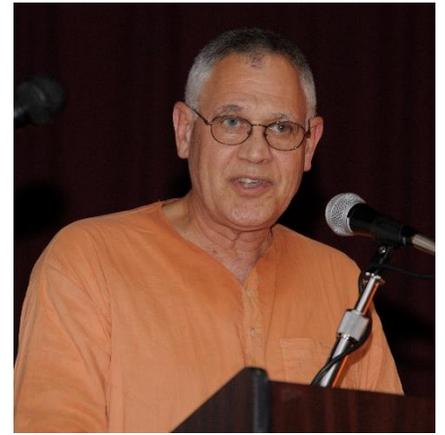


SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WEST

SWAMI ATMAJNANANANDA

Minister, Vedanta Society of Washington, D.C.

This lecture was delivered on Nov. 9th, 2013 at "Chicago Calling"



My pranams to revered General Secretary Maharaj, revered Chetanandaji Maharaj and all other senior Monks, Nuns, Sanyasinins, admirers and devotees of Swami Vivekananda.

My topic is philosophy of Vivekananda and how we can implement this; in this modern age. The entire philosophical teachings of Swami Vivekananda not only philosophical ideas but his educational philosophy, his ideas of national reconstruction, his concept of an ideal society, his ideas of nation building; all these had one core principal behind "the idea of unity of existence". The facts that humanity is one single spiritual family, not only humanity then take creation. One supreme consciousness is an immanent principal residing in all beings and that is also the omnipresent or pervading principal and the ultimate transcendental reality. As we realize this reality within us the immanent, we also recognize its omnipresent nature so as we enjoy peace and harmony within; we become better human beings, we can look upon entire humanity as one spiritual fraternity. This idea he termed as the universal spiritual humanism that is the term used by many of the scholars. Research scholars have written thesis on Swami Vivekananda's philosophy; Universal Spiritual Humanism.

If you look at the history of humanism you find humanism had a very long history right from the time of Thesis; the ancient Greek philosopher in the seventh century, Timocrates, the great platonic like Plotinus and Philo. And later on Augustine and our own times we have radical humanists and

a large numbers of great thinkers who focused on the human needs above everything but Swamiji said this humanism had a spiritual dimension. This spiritual ideal at practical level works in the form of synthesis and harmony. There is a great quotation from Swami Vivekananda "What we need today is the harmonious blending of the best elements of the occidental and the oriental, the scientific and religious, the spiritual and the rational, faith and reason". This ideal of complete man; a complete spiritual ideal represents a radical a paradigm change in the history of religious thoughts. In fact right from the day Swamiji delivered his famous Chicago lecture till our own times if you observe the gradual evolution in religious history, religious thought you can find an evolution a growth from more and more conservative to more and more broadminded catholic outlook. I believe the two important areas in which Swamiji's philosophy can be implemented is the areas of interreligious relationship and education.

If you look at the history of the concept of the interreligious relationship in the early days till Swamiji appeared on the scene people in the western world use to think that their own religious idea is the only path and all other religious ideas are wrong. The approach is called religious exclusivism. From that today you find people belonging to different religious groups, religious denominations coming together under a single platform. In fact, Pope John Paul II who was responsible for the radical change in the Vatican's

approach into other religions denominations who was instrumental in evolving the very concept of humanism made a very important statement in his document. Pope John Paul II said "There could be truths in other religions too" that was maybe in 1962. Now today you find no enlightened preacher will dare to address an educated or enlightened audience and make a declaration that our religion is the only path and all other religions are wrong. At least they won't do it very often. So there is a gradual opening up in the religious organizations.

Swamiji made another radical contribution which is very relevant today. Swamiji said "Spirituality goes beyond the prison walls of God, a Harley book, a set of rituals and a place of worship". In fact most of the criticisms the religion had to encounter in 19th century means the age in which Swami Vivekananda was born and worked came from positivists, communists, socialist humanist and also the followers of Darwin; the evolutionists who said that the biblical concept of creation is totally contrary to the discoveries of modern science. Positivists said the religion which confines itself within the prison walls of faith in a transcendental moral authority, religion who creates this world stands apart and dominates the world, religion that divides mankind into believers and non-believers promising the believers with heaven and terrifying the non-believers with hell eternal damnation, that kind of religion has no place in modern man's life. Swamiji said "Religion is manifestation of divinity already man and much more important definition religion is spirituality". Spirituality goes even beyond the idea of God. Swamiji and in fact his great guru Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa they were embodiments of belief in God but their spiritual ideas goes beyond the traditional God centered concepts of religion. According to Swami Vivekananda, Buddha was one of the greatest spiritual personality the world has produced. Buddha did not affirm his faith in a creator God and still he was spiritual. So spirituality goes beyond religion, today you find there are many atheists, many humanists who will

agree with you if you tell them that we need spirituality but they will; tell you we don't need a God, we don't need a religion. But Swamiji offers a new religious idea, a religious concept that goes beyond the accepted conventional definitions of religion which confines itself into narrow prison cells surrounded by certain external rituals and faith systems. Now if we can present this universal spiritual humanism before the broad world, I believe modern world will accept this because it opens its doors and windows even to non-believers. Even people who do not believe in religion can be spiritual. As I said Buddha, Vardhamana Mahavira; the founder of Jina religion were the greatest spiritual personalities the world has produced. In fact this is the most radical definition which Swamiji gave "spirituality is something which accommodates religion, which accommodates God but goes beyond belief, beyond a God centered structured religious philosophy. This is a very important contribution; this idea occurred to me whenever I had to encounter students coming from catholic religious institutions, Presbyterian religious institutions and even when I had to interact with student community in the University of Northern Texas. In fact, they were asking questions about spirituality and if you tell them spirituality is something universal spirituality accommodates all religions but goes beyond all this; it's a great paradigm change in the history of religious thought.

Another very important contribution Swami Vivekananda gave which we can implement in today's world is its educational relevance, especially students in modern times especially in western countries. If we talk to them about religion immediately they are reminded of the crusades, the inquisitions, 30 years of war and then the casteism, the untouchability all these problems which all organized religions had to encounter. But spirituality goes beyond this; spirituality is harmonizing it is synthesizing it looks upon entire humanity as one spiritual family.

A person who really understands this concept of spiritual oneness of creation can never quarrel with anyone, can never hurt anyone because there is no anyone the whole humanity is one spiritual family. There is a great verse in the Mandukya Karika, this morning Yogatmanandaji was referring to one important point Swamiji said again and again "I preached nothing but Upanishads". Swamiji was the great exponent of the ancient age old Vedic wisdom. Mandukya Karika is a metrical commentary on Mandukya Upanishad, a very short book. Kārikā, verse 3.17

स्वसिद्धान्तव्यवस्थासु द्वैतिनो निश्चिता दृढम् ।
परस्परं विरुद्ध्यन्ते तैरयं न विरुद्ध्यते ॥

*svasiddhāntavyavasthāsu dvaitino niścitā dṛḍham
parasparam virudhyante tairayam na virudhyate .*

If you ask me I would say Swami Vivekananda's universal humanism is the most precise and philosophical interpretation of this verse. The verse says "Those who believe that their own path is the only right path and all others are wrong, they fight among themselves. But those who believe that all different paths are different approaches different attitudes different roads leading to the same spiritual destination, such a person cannot hurt anyone cannot injure anyone.

In Swami Vivekananda's words "The manifestation of divinity already in man". This is the spiritual dimension of Swami Vivekananda's radical contribution to religious thought which has a great educational significance. I said in the beginning in the 19th century with the emergence of Marx and Engels with the popularity of Das Kapital in Communist Manifesto a large number of modern humanist began to challenge to exclusivity claims of established religions. Positivist began to declare that a religion which cannot establish a scientific validity in the laboratory of modern science has no place in modern man's thoughts. And again modern humanist also began to declare the religion doesn't take care of the affairs of common man in this age. But Swamiji said true religion is spirituality and true religion defined spirituality becomes a great spiritual ethical philosophy. The infinite oneness of

the soul is the eternal sanction of all morality all ethics all good actions. I would say even Karl Marx or Engels or Lenin or even our own Christopher Hitchens who passed the other day would have agreed with Swami Vivekananda. Because Swami Vivekananda expounded a true spiritual philosophy for our times and our age which nobody can deny. If we can propagate this spiritual dimension of ethics and religious philosophy in our education institutions and especially the dialogical approach which is becoming more and more popular, we will be able to make educated people understand the relevance of Swami Vivekananda's philosophy.

There are three main approaches in interreligious relationship. One is exclusivist approach which as I said earlier kind of fundamentalist fanatical approach. The second one is syncretic approach which is a kind of elitism without any serious understanding of other people's religious thoughts, which just blindly put on religious teaching together. It is kind of artificial mingling together of conflicting religious ideas belonging to different religious persuasions. Both of these approaches are unscientific. But Swamiji said the true foundation of interreligious relationship should be spirituality; it's called dialogical approach. You accept the essential spiritual principals the fundamental core teachings of all the great religious traditions of the world. This also is the essence of his idea of universal religion and practical Vedanta. If we can accept and synthesize and harmonize the spiritual essence of different religious traditions and project this as a unifying thread for the whole humanity then we can find many common factors among conflicting cultural and civilization denominations. So Swamiji wanted a kind of harmony and synthesis at a cultural level religious level and spiritual level. If we can project this idea of universal spiritual humanism we will be able to make a great contribution towards popularizing Swamiji's philosophy.

Thank you. Namaskar.

TO SEE POTENTIAL DIVINITY IN EACH SOUL



One of the great disciples of Sri Ramakrishna was Swami Shivananda. He became the second President of the Ramakrishna Order of monks and one of Swamiji's best friends. Both of them had a fondness for pets. At the Belur Math monastery he had two pet dogs Kelo and Bhulo. One day one of them was lying sleepily at his feet when a visitor arrived. The Swami, in the course of conversation, said "Do you see this dog lying here? He is my dog. Just like that, I am Ramakrishna's dog; I am lying at His feet!"

After he established Belur Math Swami Vivekananda lived there for only a few years, but there were pets because he loved them. Among them was a dog Bagha, who had arrived as a stray. One day Bagha committed the unforgivable, and made a mess in front of the shrine. Some of the monks were shocked and tried to send him to the jungle on the other side of the river Ganges. But Bagha jumped right back into the boat and refused to be pushed out. So they brought him back to the monastery grounds, and he hid himself for the rest of the day.

The next morning before daylight he stationed himself at the door of Swami Vivekananda's bathroom, and when Swamiji nearly stepped on him in the dark, he whimpered and rubbed his head on his master's feet. Swamiji understood, and he told the monks to leave Bagha alone. "He thinks I am the boss here," he laughed. There were no electric lights in those days, and the monks used to carry dim lanterns with them to the lavatory at night. Bagha would go along with them at night and bark if he sensed a snake nearby.

When Swamiji passed away, Bagha sat by the cremation site for a long time afterward and refused food or water that day. Strange to say, when the dog died and they lowered his body into the water of the Ganges, though it went out with the tide, it was found on the incoming tide near to the monastery. So the monks decided to bury Bagha's corpse on the monastery grounds.

An excerpt from: "Life in Indian Monasteries", by Swami Bhaskarananda

Story from the Mahabharata

On the way to the heaven (*Mahaprasthanik Parva*) Yudhishtira and the dog continue their journey up Mount Meru. Indra (king of Gods) appears with his chariot, suggesting he doesn't need to walk all the way, he can jump in and together they can go to heaven. ... Yudhishtira asks if his friend, the dog, can jump into the chariot first. Indra replies dogs cannot enter his chariot, only Yudhishtira can. Yudhishtira refuses to leave the dog. He claims the dog is his friend, and for him to betray his friend during his life's journey would be a great sin. ... The dog, watching Yudhishtira's commitment for his friend, transforms and reappears as deity Dharma. The deity Dharma then praises Yudhishtira for his virtues. Yudhishtira enters heaven on Indra's chariot.



There was a holy man who used to live in a state of ecstasy and would not speak with anyone. He was regarded as a lunatic. One day having begged some food in the village, he took his seat by the side of a dog and fell to eating. A strange sight now presented itself and attracted a crowd of spectators, for the holy man would put one morsel into his own mouth and the next into that of the dog, so that the man and the beast went on eating together like a pair of friends. Some of the spectators began to laugh at the holyman as being a mad fellow. Thereupon he said, "Why do you laugh? Vishnu is seated with Vishnu; Vishnu is feeding Vishnu; Why do you laugh, O Vishnu? Whatever is, is Vishnu."

From the "Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna"

HAD THERE BEEN ANOTHER VIVEKANANDA

(PART I)

SWAMI ISHATMANANDA

Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society of Chicago

It was 4th July, 1902. Swamiji was engrossed in deep meditation for almost 3 hours from 8 am to 11 am in the Meditation Hall (currently known as "Old Meditation Hall" in Belur). He completed his morning service and slowly walked towards the monastery ground, humming the lines from the famous song "Is my Mother dark? ..." While walking on the ground Swamiji murmured "If there were another Vivekananda, then he would have understood what this Vivekananda has done!" Swami Premananda overheard that [Yuganayak Vivekananda, page : 94]

It will be unfortunate if somebody points a finger at Swamiji claiming he said this out of pride! If we study the life of this great Soul, we will know that he is beyond all these human limitations. For a person who does not even have body consciousness, there is no question of him having pride!

When Thakur, Sri Ramakrishna, was in His human body, Swami Vivekananda was young Narendranath. Narendranath wished he could go to Thakur's meditation place in Dakshineswar and meditate under the Panchavati tree. His wish was fulfilled. He was accompanied by Girish Chandra Ghosh. The place was extremely holy and quiet, but was full of mosquitoes. Girish Chandra tried his best but could not concentrate on his meditation due to the mosquito bites. He gave up and opened his eyes. He was curious to check what Naren was doing! And he was astonished to witness a miracle in front of his eyes! Naren's body was covered with millions of mosquitoes like a black quilt, but he was completely lost in his inner world in deep meditation. The outer circumstance was immaterial to him! This is Swami Vivekananda! Only a person like him, who transcended physical limitations, could do such

things. There is another famous incident when Swamiji went into Samadhi with Thakur's blessings. In his Samadhi, Swamiji felt the presence of a glittering light at the back of his head. Even the Sun, Moon or vast Sky appeared to be insignificant in front of that divine light. Slowly the almighty power of that light engulfed the whole surrounding and his mind was at rest in that deep holy light in blissful and eternal Brahman, leaving all the worldly feelings away. Narendranath said, "I lost my bodily self that day and felt the connection with that eternal divine Self. But within my core heart, I still had some pride, which brought me back into this world. In that kind of Samadhi state, people lose the trivial thoughts and even the words. The human Soul meets Brahman, the ultimate truth!" When he came back from Samadhi, he felt as if he lost all his organs except the brain. This very feeling made him cry and he shouted loudly and told Gopal "My brother Gopal, where did I lose my body?" Sri Ramakrishna introduced Swamiji, the carrier of His spiritual lineage and said "Narendra is a real Shiva, not an artificial one!" "He has no ego".

What are the contributions of Swami Vivekananda?

- Discovered the root (source) of human civilization
- Swami Vivekananda's contribution at international level : introduction and friendship
- Swami Vivekananda's contribution at national level : awakening and freedom
- Swami Vivekananda's contribution at social level : new horizon and idea
- Swami Vivekananda's contribution at personal level : self-confidence and fearlessness
- Swami Vivekananda's contribution to humanity : a wonderful monastic organization

Discovered the root (source) of human civilization

Swami Vivekananda rediscovered the root of human civilization that was realization of Atman through self-introspection. Since the very beginning of human history, people in India, a vast fertile land covered with various rivers like the Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu, Kaveri, followed the path to find truth after solving the problems of food, shelter and clothing . There was a constant effort to get the answer to this question, 'By Knowing what one can understand everything' All the great Scholars of material and spiritual knowledge indicated again and again , "Look at your inner self and try to understand that eternal truth. If you understand yourself, you will understand all the creation as well as the great Creator of this universe. And you will get to know the root of human civilization."

Indians in the core of their hearts have always been known as seekers of truth as opposed to believers in the conventions of society. They are in search of both material and spiritual knowledge. Like most other countries, India has gone through many ups and downs in political and social life due to various foreign rulers like Shak, Hun, Pathan, Mughal, Turk. India, as a country, shaped herself through acceptance and rejection of various influences. In 1757, India was captured by foreign rulers in the Battle of Plassey. In 1765, Robert Clive wielded enormous influence over Shah Alam, the Nawab of Delhi, and acquired large amounts of wealth in reparations for previous losses and revenue from trade. In the name of East India Company, Clive forced the Nawab to pay the tax for Bengal, Odisha and Bihar. In 1770, India witnessed a catastrophic famine, named "The Famine of '76" which caused millions and millions of deaths. People in India had so much trouble getting the basic needs of life that they were far away from higher philosophical thoughts. They were derailed from their journey towards Self-realization.

Indian economy, including small and medium crafts and businesses, was shattered due to several factors like The Permanent Settlement Acts of 1793 headed by Charles Cornwallis or Industrial Revolution in Europe in 1800. The British rulers not only killed our traditional political, social and financial structure, they also attacked the core of Indian heart – that is our religion. To eradicate our strong culture, which was founded on religion and faith, the British Rulers started various initiatives like the education system of Lord Macaulay. The sole objective of these initiatives was to make Indian culture seem inferior by injecting disrespect and negligence towards traditional Indian thoughts and beliefs among the people. But, in this troubled time, India was blessed with many great souls who showed us the path of light to overcome the turmoil.

- The protest by notable writers and poets like Rabindranath Tagore or Kazi Nazrul Islam through their strong writings

- The influence of Raja Ram Mohan Roy through his logical and powerful thought

- The efforts of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar to eradicate backward social customs

- The introduction of modern education through the establishment of Calcutta University in 1867

- The foundation of the Indian National Association and the strong leadership of Surendranath Banerjee, Ananda Mohan Bose etc.

- Sri Gurudas Banerjee & others Orthodox Hindu ideology movement.

- Establishment of various ideologies, beliefs and paths through the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society, Prarthana Samaj, idol worship society etc.

This was a very exciting time in Indian history. And Vivekananda with his logical mind and strong conviction was growing up with within these ideological currents and cross-currents. The adverse outer world could not touch his inner self. He always focused on his goals and followed the path of truth for Self-realization.

He concentrated on gaining the knowledge on of *apara vidya* and *para vidya*, material knowledge and spiritual experience and tried to find out the root of human civilization and the reason behind the creation of this big universe. He met various religious scholars with the quest for God and asked "Have you seen God?"

It would be interesting to recount two famous stories of Vivekananda's life, which brought him face to face with the Creator of this universe. He became the knower of Brahman.

When somebody realizes his own Self and the infinite Brahman, the mind gets free from all doubts and disbeliefs. All questions get answered..Narendranath realized this ultimate truth of life at a very young age with the blessing of Sri Ramakrishna. Many people devote their entire lives but still cannot achieve this higher state.

Narendranath's initial beliefs were shaped by Brahmo concepts, which included belief in a formless God and the deprecation of idolatry. He was also not ready to accept the view of Advaita Vedanta Though he mentioned in his song, "Whatever is manifested or unmanifested, it's You, the supreme!" Though he believed the oneness of the Supreme Power, he was not completely convinced by Non-dualism (Advaita). He jokingly used to say, "How can it be possible that everything around is Brahman? Are these mere Jugs or vessels Brahman too?" But he had his life changing experience when Sri Ramakrishna touched him for the first time in Dakshineswar. It was like a miracle! Narendranath realized the ultimate truth of life and discovered the Root of Human Civilization. There is nothing in the world except God....this is the teaching of Non- dualism (Advaita) science. "Everything changed just by the touch of Sri Ramakrishna. Truly I saw that nothing exist in this universe except god"-Vivekananda narrated his experience of that special day.

Again he discovered the same truth through his own spiritual effort While visiting the Himalayas with Swami Akhandananda, Swami Vivekananda

stopped for the night near a water-mill by the side of a stream. An aged Pipal tree stood on the bank of the flowing stream; after his bath, the swami repaired to the tree and sat there for about an hour absorbed in meditation. Then he said to his companion, "Well Gangadhar, here under this banyan tree one of the greatest problems of my life has been solved." Then he told of his wonderful vision about the oneness of the microcosm and the macrocosm. He deeply understood the root of civilization and explained "In the beginning was the word etc. Formed and the Eternally Formless"[Yuganayak Vivekananda 1/231].



Sri Ramakrishna said "the person who can see unity in diversity , is a true human being". Without the realization of this highest truth, it's hard to feel the oneness of souls given all the diversities and differences in the outer world. Due to the lack of this understanding, many social and religious reformers failed to unite the people. Swamiji explained [in Mahima Taba Udbhasita, page 197] that all these reformers did not study and understand their own religion properly, and none of them followed the spiritual practises to understand the root of all religions (which is Hinduism). By the grace of God I have understood the "oneness" and solved the problems of the soul.

He traveled around all the corners of India, visiting centers of learning and acquainting himself with diverse religious traditions and social patterns. He developed sympathy for the suffering and poverty of the people, and resolved to uplift the nation. The descendants of the great Rishis in India were living like animals.

Through his extensive travels around India, Vivekananda realized that he needed to awaken the true spirit of Indian people. With so many years of slavery and the false propaganda of the rulers, they had lost their true selves. He needed to spread the value of our tradition and culture and inculcate self-confidence within them. This process would be accelerated through visiting the Western countries. Swamiji took the determination to save the human society with his understanding of the root of civilization. Absolute Oneness in Apparent Diversity.

Swami Vivekananda's contribution at international level: introduction and friendship

Swamiji's contribution at the international level is phenomenal. Due to the lack of transport and communication facilities, information dissemination was very limited. In our childhood, we used to keep hearing that America was a country situated far away from India and one needed to cross seven seas and thirteen rivers to reach there. Nobody knew the logic behind arriving at those magic numbers - seven and thirteen! But we always enjoyed envisioning the picture of a mysterious country, which was far away! Due to the lack of proper communication, a lot of false propaganda was spread in the East and West. Some so called religious preachers took advantage of the situation and gave a misleading impression about the East to the West. The British Poet Rudyard Kipling wrote "East is East, West is West, and never the twain shall meet." Many people had travelled to Europe and America before, but Swamiji was the first ambassador to represent India's greatness. For many rich people, travel to West meant only a lovely vacation and the opportunity to share good stories with their friends and neighbors. There is a famous story of Tagore. A man went to meet Rabindranath after spending 3 months in England. The man started the conversation in English. And his English was

horrible! Tagore asked him politely why he was not speaking in Bengali. The man replied that he forgot his mother tongue Bengali while being in England. Tagore told him sarcastically "You forgot Bengali and could not learn English as well. What will you do?"

In this kind of situation, Vivekananda was the first person who bridged the gap between East and West. He represented the true picture of India in front of the whole world. Swamiji, a young Monk of 29/30 age, carried the symbol of sacrifice and service and started addressing the audience in a confident and appealing tone at the Parliament of Religion. He stated, "I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the mother of religions, and I thank you in the name of millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects." He opened a vision of India in the eyes of Western people. An American Lady Cristian Greenstidal, said, "our love for India came to birth, I think, when we first heard him, Swami Vivekananda, say the word, India ...ever after India became the land of our heart's desire." Due to the false propaganda of the British rulers and their minions, the religious preachers, India was thought of as a poor and backward country. With His strong and powerful presentation, Swamiji painted a different picture of India – a land of great knowledge and rich culture. The people from Europe and America accepted India with great respect. A Few notable names are the German Scholar, Max Müller, the French Scholar, Romain Rolland and the American Scholar, Henry Valentine Miller.

It is incredible how Irish Margaret Elizabeth Noble, British Captain and Mrs Sevier, American Cristine Greenstidal, Prof. J H Wright, Mr and Mrs Hale, Mr and Mrs Lyon, Mr and Mrs Ole Bull, Philosopher and Speaker Robert Ingersoll, Mrs Josephine Macleod, Mr. Francis Leggett and many more were inspired by Swamiji's talk and devoted their entire lives for the betterment of India.

Even the big temple at Belur Math in India was established using the financial aid from two American ladies – Mrs. Worcester and Ms Rubel.

Swamiji not only brought India's rich culture and religion to the West, he also was deeply impressed by the Western culture. He started sharing his experiences from the West, their secret of success – their hard working mentality. He praised the Western Ladies – their independent, holy and kind nature. There are thousands and thousands of women who were as pure as the white snow. The hard-work, unity, punctuality, women empowerment etc. fascinated Swamiji. He wanted India to learn these qualities from the West. On the other hand, he did not appreciate the physical enjoyment or materialism of the West.

Vivekananda introduced us to the true West. The people from the West possess the same human qualities as the people from the East! They laugh, cry, love and crave for love. And with this understanding, he liberated us from ignorance and encouraged the East to embrace the West with love and friendship.

The thousands and thousands of years old, Vedanta, our ancient treasure was first introduced to the West by Vivekananda. He embraced all the people, especially the ones who were considered sinners. He firmly told them that they were divine, not sinners. The people who want to use religion for their own benefit, always frighten people. They force people to accept their orders without any logic or proof. Swamiji asked them to confess their sin to Him, the God, and God would make them free. He said "Each Soul is potentially divine. It is a sin to call a man sinner." Swamiji faced many hindrances and protests from the so called religious preachers. But, he fought back alone! He showed a new path - a path of light, knowledge and awakening to the West. To bridge the gap between the West and the East, he taught spiritual knowledge to the West and learnt ways to material upliftment from the West. Swamiji acted as an invisible bridge of friendship, love and peace between the West and the East.

[to be continued]



The Drop of Water Who Wept

(As told to the opera singer, **Emma Calve** who was repulsed at the thought of the loss of her ego or individuality. (from her autobiography, *My Life*, 1922, Appleton)

Swami Vivekananda said to her:

"One day a drop of water fell into the vast ocean. When it found itself there, it began to weep and complain.

The great ocean laughed at the

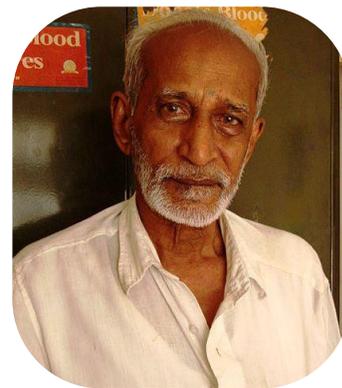


drop of water. 'Why do you weep?' it asked. 'I do not understand. When you join me, you join all your brothers and sisters, the other drops of water of which I am made. You become the ocean itself. If you wish to leave me, you have only to rise up on a sunbeam into the clouds. From there you can descend again, little drop of water, a blessing and a benediction to the thirsty earth'".

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A will to serve humanity has been his guiding principle throughout his life. A gold medalist in library science, he also holds a masters degree in literature and history. During his 35-year-long career, he diligently and willingly donated his salary month after month towards charity and did odd jobs to meet his daily needs. Even after retirement, he worked as a waiter in a hotel in exchange for two meals a day and a meager salary so that he could continue to donate to orphanages and to children's educational funds.

"... The place where I lived was a tiny village with no provision for roads, buses, schools, electricity, and there was not even a shop to buy a matchbox from. I had to walk 10km to school and back and walking all that way alone can be a pretty lonesome experience. Hence, I had this thought that if I could motivate most of the children to come with me to school, it would be great fun as well. In those days, children could not afford to pay school fees...I offered to pay their school fees, got them books and clothes as well."

Kalyanasundaram says money does not impress him at all. "One can get money in three possible ways. First, through earnings; secondly, through parents' earnings, and thirdly, through money donated by someone. But there's nothing more fulfilling than being able to donate money for charity out of your own earnings."

He has received several honors from the government of India, and has been recognized by the United Nations. He has received several awards and has donated Rs 30 crore of prize money he got from these honors.

Palam Kalyanasundaram lives a simple life all on his own in a small house in Chennai. He never married for the simple reason that he wanted to spend all that he earned on charity. Even today, he comes to office regularly and does whatever he can for the uplift of the underprivileged people.

Adapted from:

<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-73-year-old-tamil-nadu-librarian-donated-rs-30-crore-to-the-uneducated-poor-1928555>

In the world take always the position of the giver. Give everything and look for no return. Give love, give help, give service, give any little thing you can, but keep out barter. Make no conditions, and none will be imposed. Let us give out of our own bounty, just as God gives to us.

Swami Vivekananda

CW 7/Inspired Talks/Wednesday, June 19

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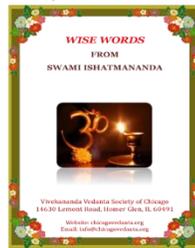
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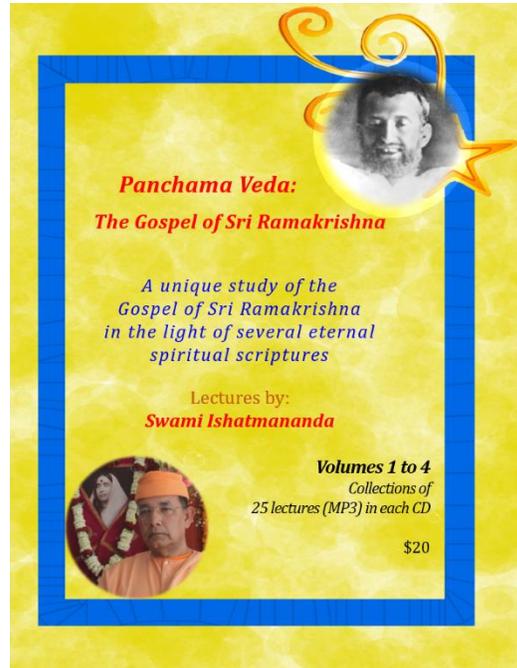
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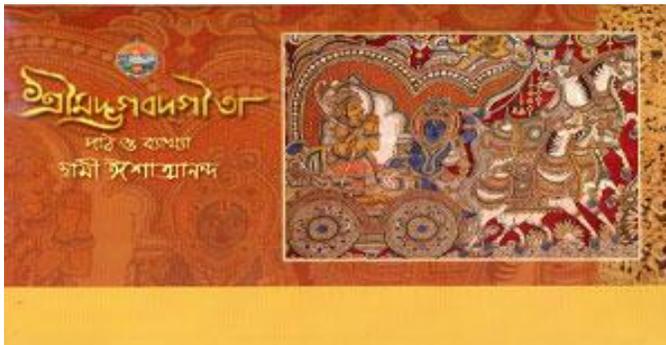


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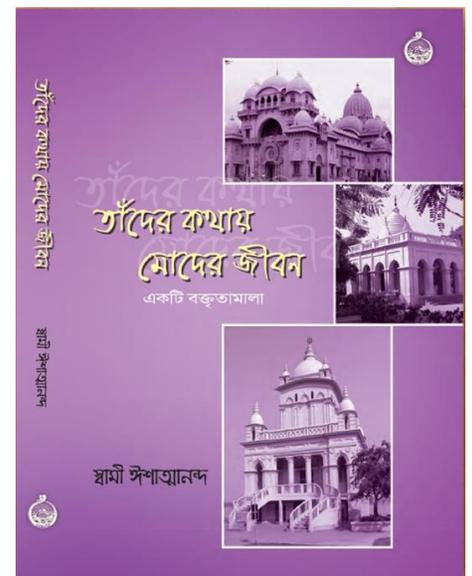
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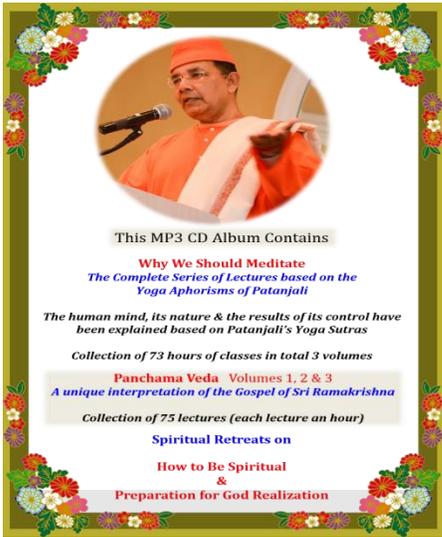
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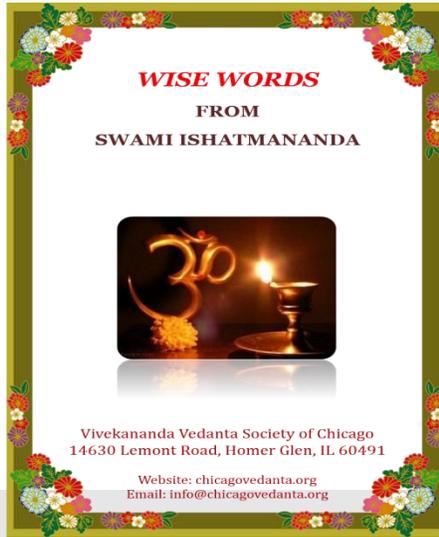
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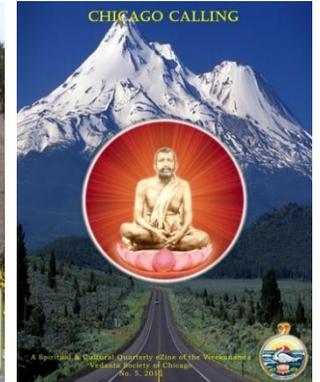
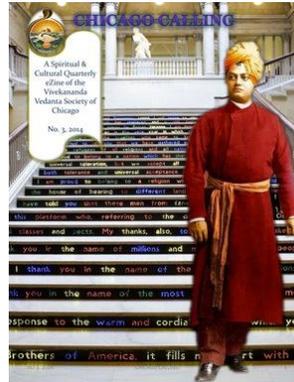
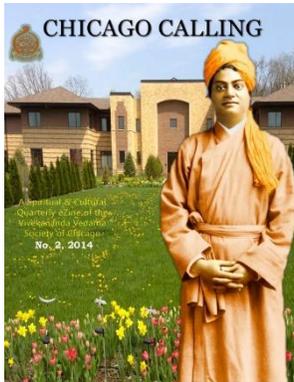
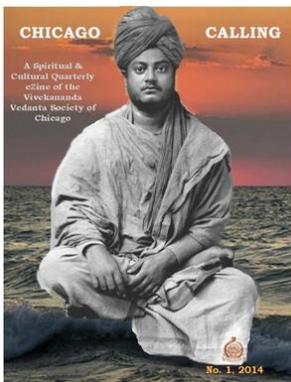
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